

Significant Books

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The Child's World: His Social Perception. *Frank J. Estvan and Elizabeth W. Estvan.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1959. 287 p.

For all who have worked with the elementary school child and curriculum, reading *The Child's World: His Social Perception* will be a revealing experience. The reader cannot fail to recognize many of the gross (and probably invalid) assumptions underlying present selection of learning experiences.

The authors report three separate carefully designed investigations which examine the way children perceive their social world. The data for these studies were gathered by means of a projective technique in which children were asked to react to a series of thoughtfully selected pictures. The children's responses enabled the researchers to gather data relative to these three questions: "How do children perceive rural and urban life situations?" "How do children perceive social status in life situations?" and "How do children perceive child and adult life situations?"

The subjects of the study were boys and girls from both urban and rural first and sixth grades, including children of above-average and below-average ability. As a result, it was possible to make comparisons of the perceptions of: urban and rural children, boys and girls, first and sixth graders, and the bright and below-average ability children.

In addition, the Estvans' book gives authoritative philosophical and psychological explanations of perception. The procedures, materials and evaluation techniques used in the perception studies are clearly described. In reporting the studies, technical data and statistical analyses have been omitted from the text, although the tabulations are included in the Appendix. This arrangement contributes considerably to the readability of the book.

The results of each study are summarized, apparent trends are noted, and provocative questions are raised. In the final chapter, "Developing Children's Social Perception," the authors suggest the direction curriculum design must take for the school to assume its full responsibility for developing children's perceptions. There is convincing evidence that: (a) there is an inseparable relationship between *perceiving* and *living*; (b) perception continues to develop as long as an individual lives; (c) a child needs help in arriving at "correct" perceptions; (d) perception development requires concurrent development of a rich background of concepts; (e) perception and learning are intimately related. These generalizations very clearly establish perception development as a responsibility of the school program.

While the contributions of this book are numerous, the reviewer presents the following as being unique. The direct

and precise writing style is well adapted to the description of research design. In quoting the actual responses of the children, the authors have encouraged the reader to identify some youngsters he, too, has known. Because these accounts stimulate the reader to speculate on what conditions and experiences brought out the particular responses, the Estvans' plea for systematic study of individual children is made more dramatic.

The Child's World in its presentation of a study of children's social perceptions is an essential first step. Its major contribution may well be realized when the findings are implemented in curriculum design and school organization. Serious and thoughtful educators are left with no alternative.

—Reviewed by ELEANORE E. LARSON, associate professor of education, The University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Issues in Curriculum Development.

Marvin D. Alcorn and James M. Linley, editors. *Yonkers-on-Hudson: World Book Company, 1959. 420 p.*

This volume is a compilation of modern readings on various subjects generally included in the broad field of curriculum. As such it is a unique addition to the curriculum literature.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part consists of three chapters on the modern curriculum setting. The second part contains five chapters concerned with the operation of the curriculum. The final two chapters on the process and direction of the curriculum make up the third part. Each chapter contains one or more readings, most of which are taken from periodical literature. Chapter introductions, summaries, and tie-ins are written by the editors and, for the most part, they have applied a research review technique to capsule other writings.

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No doubt the volume is most useful at the graduate level. The graduate student can find here many excerpts from the periodical literature in curriculum, and they should be helpful to him especially as a time-saver in library research. Because of literature reviewing by the editors and the numerous selections, a large body of information is incorporated. A very broad interpretation of curriculum has been taken in the book. The editors have included treatments of social forces, curriculum content, teaching resources, common and special needs of learners, groupings, curriculum design, planning issues, and research. The summaries by the editors at the end of each part are very well done.

Whenever one reads a book of readings, he cannot help but evaluate the selections in terms of his own biases. The following comments must be read with this in mind. This reviewer kept looking

for such authors' names as B. Othanel Smith, Hollis Caswell, Minor Gwynn, William Ragan, Edward Krug, Nelson Bossing, Harold Spears, Florence Stratemeyer, Virgil Herrick, Arno Bellack, Galen Saylor, William Alexander, but they were missing as selection authors, even though they may have been recognized in editorial comment. These people have had much to say about issues in curriculum development, and they represent well-established points of view. Furthermore, this reviewer cannot help but resent the inclusion of material by such authors as Arthur Bestor in a serious book on curriculum. Bestor is anything but a careful student of curriculum, and therefore, does not belong among them.

—Reviewed by **GEORGE A. BEAUCHAMP**, professor of education, School of Education, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

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